

THREE GUITARS

My guitar lies silent in its case at home -- excellent of workmanship, expensive, a gift. Visiting in New Mexico I have only my sister's, a cheap toy my brother found in the garage and gave her rather than see it go to waste. It reminds me of Campion's -- his is beautiful, old, and can sing like a brass choir, but he never changes the strings, so it won't hold a tune. I must make do with what I have -- tune it, the creaking pegs and stiff wire strings, and sing "Red River Valley" at the top of my lungs.

-- John Herndon

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HOUSE OF WORSHIP

It's Sunday morning and I've just dropped off my wife and kid at church. I know I probably should have gone in, my wife tells me that my daughter always asks why I haven't and "Does that mean daddy won't join us in heaven?", things like that. And I've tried, once or twice, not lately, but it's like brussel sprouts, you don't just develop a taste for them. You either like them or you don't. Anyway, my father used to do the same thing. He'd come back after services to pick us up. He spent the time at a donut shop, drinking cup after cup of black coffee, having only one plain, brown donut to eat. You could see him there every Sunday with four or five others, their backs to the window, maybe talking about the football game on later or this year's baseball team or the weather or nothing, just sitting. When he'd pick us up, he'd always ask, "And how were services?" And my mother would kind of wink and say, "Fine. How were yours?" I'm not too different, except I put cream in the coffee and have a donut with something in or on it. We all worship in our own way, I guess, some with jelly and some plainly unadorned.